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ABSTRACT

A practicum developed and implemented an integrated reading program to raise reading vocabulary and comprehension scores and reading attitudes in a fourth-grade classroom. A classroom of 23 students was used to implement the program. A standard diagnostic test was used to record pre- and post-test scores in vocabulary and comprehension, and a reading attitude survey test was used to analyze students' attitudes about recreational and instructional reading. The program consisted of a reading and writing workshop daily with emphasis on learning skills through experiences with whole text. Built-in time for reading aloud, reading silently, self-selection of reading materials and stressed process writing was provided. Results indicated a 14% increase in vocabulary and a 20% increase in comprehension skills. The most noticeable improvement was in the students' attitudes toward reading. Findings suggest that this program can provide a vehicle to facilitate and increase learning achievement. (Fifteen references, vocabulary test results, comprehension test results, reading lab scores, reading attitude survey, and literacy competency test are attached.) (Author/RS)

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IMPROVING READING SKILLS OF FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS THROUGH A LITERATURE BASED READING PROGRAM

by

Shirley Oppelt

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A Practicum Report
Submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference

May, 1991

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Abstract

Improving Reading Skills of Fourth Grade Students Through a Literature Based Reading Program
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Descriptors: Reading Improvement / Reading Attitudes / Vocabulary Development / Higher Order Thinking Skills / Using Literature to Teach Skills

This report describes an integrated reading program developed and implemented to raise reading vocabulary and comprehension scores and reading attitudes in a fourth grade classroom. A classroom of twenty three students was used to implement the program. A standard diagnostic test was used to record pre and posttest scores in vocabulary and comprehension, and a reading attitude survey test was used to analyze students' attitudes about recreational and instructional reading. The program consisted of a reading and writing workshop daily with emphasis on learning skills through experiences with whole text. There was built in time for reading aloud, reading silently, self-selection of reading materials and stressed process writing. The results indicated a 14% increase in vocabulary and a 20% increase in comprehension skills. The most noticeable improvement was in the students' attitudes toward reading. It was concluded that this program can provide a vehicle to facilitate and increase learning achievement.

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other professionals in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed: Shirley Oppelt

Table of Contents

	Page
Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Authorship Statement	iii
Observer's Verification	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapters	
I. Purpose	1
II. Research and Solution Strategy	9
III. Method	22
IV. Results	34
V. Recommendations	38
Reference List	39
Appendices	
Appendix A: Vocabulary Test Results	42
Appendix B: Comprehension Test Results	44
Appendix C: Reading Lab Scores	46
Appendix D: Reading Attitude Survey	48
Appendix E: Literary Competency Test	51

CHAPTER I

Background

School and Community Setting

The setting of this practicum is an elementary school in North Florida. This school was established in 1919 and is now in its second year at a new school site, located approximately two miles south of the original school. This school is large in size with one thousand ten students, forty classroom teachers, two ESE teachers, two speech teachers, one gifted teacher, one curriculum resource teacher, one science-math resource teacher, two counselors, two music teachers, two physical education teachers and two Writing-to-Read labs. The average classroom size is twenty-five students.

The ethnic population of the school is made up of eighty-five percent White, nine percent Black, and six percent Hispanic and other minorities. A Spanish program is provided for the students learning English as a second language.

This community is classified as transient, with thirty-two percent of the student population transferring during a nine-month period. This time of transition is a

time of readjustment for the child, which results in a loss of continuity from school to school.

The students in this school come from a large variety of backgrounds. About fifty-three percent of the parents are skilled, eleven percent unskilled, twenty percent professional and sixteen percent are unemployed. A low attendance at the Parent Teacher Organization meetings is also very common, with teachers making up the majority of the audience. On the other hand, parents have responded well to activities such as the Math-Science Fair, Art Show, the Social Studies Fair, and Open House.

Other factors within the school or community which contribute to unsatisfactory conditions are:

1. Few job opportunities exist in the surrounding area.
2. The high school does not provide enough special programs for adults on a regular basis.
3. There are not enough supervised after-school sponsored recreational activities.
4. The community is widespread, ten to fifteen miles in some directions.

The writer has been a teacher for eighteen years, with the last three years at this present location in the fourth grade. Assignments have included kindergarten,

second grade, third grade, and eight years in fourth grade. Personal conversations with colleagues, and workshops demonstrating a total literary environment have created a desire for this writer to look for a more natural way of teaching reading skills.

According to school records, forty-two percent of the fourth grade population are identified as being below grade level in reading. These children are unable to successfully pass the Ginn Reading Unit Tests at the end of each six weeks and require remediation in order to continue. The end-of-year CTBS (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills) scores verify this same percentage of students who are reading below grade level. The inability of this below-level group to improve their reading scores is an obstacle which prevents these children from becoming readers.

The students scoring below thirty-six percent are placed in the Chapter 1 Reading Lab, which is a remediation class. This class works closely with the classroom teacher to prescribe unique instructional practices for individual students. Still, these children may be lacking language experiences that correlate with success.

Since the traditional methods of teaching reading skills have not fully brought these students to grade level, alternate methods should be implemented that might meet the needs of this particular group of students.

The number of Americans who cannot read and write sufficiently is more than twenty-three million (Routman, 1988); and the drop-out rate at some urban high schools is above fifty percent, contributing to our problem of growing illiteracy; and one-third of all adult Americans lack the communication skills they need to function effectively. Our schools are turning out functional literates, children who can read and write in school, but who do not necessarily read and write in other contexts. Students may do well at word recognition, but many have no real understanding of the meanings of the words they are reading.

Upon entering fourth grade, students are grouped by their progress and scores on Ginn Reading Test and CTBS scores. The problem of this practicum is that the beginning school data indicates forty-two percent of fourth graders are not reading on grade level and that by the end of the academic year, most of these children have not been able to progress properly to attain higher grade level scores, and become proficient readers.

Genuine literacy involves using reading, writing, thinking, and speaking daily in the real world. A literate person is constantly thinking, and learning and assuming responsibility for growth in personal literacy.

Achieving "average" or "on grade-level" scores on a standardized reading test means one may be proficient in most literal level skills. It does not mean that one is a reader in any meaningful sense of the word. The student may learn how to read without ever having the desire to read for pleasure and information. They may be reading just to pass standardized tests, or to get a good grade on a report card.

We need not assume the child has failed, but rather, we need to look at our programs and decide if the child's needs have been met. As we analyze our program, these questions should be considered:

1. Are the students controlled by basal readers, workbooks, textbooks and tests?
2. Does the teacher make choices of what is to be read, what is to be written, and how tasks are assigned?
3. Are most students working on the same worksheet at the same time?
4. Does the teacher lecture a lot?
5. Do the students wait to be told what to do?

6. Is the present program helping students to become literate?

Newsweek (Kantrowitz, 1990) tells us fifty-four percent of nine-year-olds say they read for pleasure daily. But by age seventeen that number drops drastically, only twenty-eight percent read for fun every day. About nine percent of both nine and seventeen-year-olds say they never read for pleasure. Boys between ages eight and ten rank outdoor sports first in terms of fun, while reading a book or magazine finished sixth. Girls the same age rank reading first and outdoor sports second. Television has replaced daily reading for enjoyment purposes and obtaining information. Thus, the need for developing reading skills and improving reading attitudes is a daily concern.

The objectives of this practicum for the end of the twelve-week project follow :

1. After participation in the twelve-week literature workshop, seventy-five percent of the class will be reading on grade level on the Stanford Reading Test.
2. The targeted group, or below-level readers, will show an increase of fifty percent in

vocabulary and comprehension skills on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test.

3. A reading attitude survey will show a positive indication of student attitudes toward reading as measured by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.
4. A literary competency test will show a fifty percent increase in the students' knowledge of literary characters. Items targeted will be favorite authors and titles, poets and their works, and general information about authors. This information will be compared to an author pre-test.
5. Throughout the twelve-week project, one hundred percent of the students will make weekly visits to a first grade classroom. These visits will involve fourth grade students reading to and with a first grade student and helping them write several stories.
6. One hundred percent of the students will produce at least one classroom published piece of writing and one piece of written material that is co-authored with a first grader. These classroom publications will

incorporate all skills utilized throughout the program.

7. One hundred percent of the students will participate in a thirty-minute time period set aside daily for sustained silent reading and a forty-five minute writing workshop providing writers the time and ownership of their own material.
8. One hundred percent of the students will use critical thinking skills while studying authors and techniques of writing. All students will write a paragraph comparing and contrasting at least two books written by the same author. All students will write a paragraph comparing and contrasting at least two books with similar themes written by different authors.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Most children learn spoken language quite naturally. A child learning to speak uses language in a meaningful way to communicate for real needs. The child is encouraged, indeed rewarded, for attempts and approximations at speaking. The adult recognizes that learning to speak is an ongoing process, that the child will learn to speak correctly in time, and that the child needs encouragement and freedom to speak the best way he is able for the stage he is in at that moment. The spoken model is not to be taken lightly. The ability to process language in certain meaningful ways is one of the best predictors of how a five-year-old will do in school (Routman, 1988).

Young children acquire language, and social and academic skills, developmentally. In a supportive home environment:

1. Children are encouraged to participate actively.
2. Children try out or practice oral language skills independently.
3. Children gradually become competent and

confident in their ways of using oral language (Holdaway, 1986).

In the late 1960s, Don Holdaway theorized that the ways in which children learn oral language could be used as a developmental model to show how children learn to read and write. Working with teachers in New Zealand, he took those principles, (listed previously) and applied them to a classroom. Using memorable poems, songs, and stories in a shared book experience, he utilized enlarged print and enlarged illustrations to make Big Books so that the child in a classroom could interact with meaningful text much the same way the preschooler interacts with text at his mother's knee in the "bedtime story" environment. With the teacher pointing directly to the words as she reads the text, the child was encouraged to join in. Later on, little books would be available in the classroom for the children to use for practice. Holdaway noted the complexity of learning to read was accomplished by the learner in a self-monitoring and self-correcting manner, with many approximations leading up to competence (Holdaway, 1979).

By the mid 1970s, researchers in different parts of world, notably Marie Clay in New Zealand, Delores Durkin in the United States, and Margaret Scott in

Scotland, had reported on the way very young children learned to read and write before coming to school. Certain environmental factors emerged as common to almost all early readers:

1. Reading to children, often the same book repeatedly.
2. Seeing a reading model such as a parent, teacher, or sibling reading.
3. Availability and utilization of a wide variety of reading materials, especially storybooks.
4. Involvement with writing such as scribbling, copying, printing, and writing with paper and pencil.
5. Positive, quality interactive responses with the child in the reading-writing process (Routman, 1988).

Research studies of these natural literary learners give valuable insight into what constitutes a positive reading environment. By taking those factors that most contributed to early reading success and duplicating them in the classroom, one can theorize that, in spite of a home environment where prereading experiences are lacking, reading success will occur. A literature based approach

to teaching reading and writing then becomes a program of prevention and enhancement, rather than remediation. Even low-ability readers benefit from and understand good literature (Routman, 1988).

Literature based reading and writing emerges as a natural way to tie theory and research into children's continued learning of all the language processes: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Unfortunately, the theory and research on how young children learn to read and write has been largely ignored by the basal book publishers and the majority of educators. Standardized testing, which is the predominant means of measuring reading achievement in the United States, is geared to the basal text, and therefore, promotes and encourages the use of it (Routman, 1988).

Many school traditions seem to have actually hindered language development. In our zeal to make it easy, we have made it hard, primarily by breaking whole (natural) language up into bite-size but abstract little pieces. It seemed so logical to think that little children could best learn simple little things. We took apart the language and turned it into words, syllables, and isolated sounds. Unfortunately, we also postponed its natural purpose - the communication of meaning - and turned it into a set of

abstractions, unrelated to the needs and experiences of the children we sought to help (Goodman, 1986).

Huck (1987) tells us if we want children to learn to read and to take delight in reading, we need to make their classroom environment as rich in literary events as possible. Children need to see a reason for reading and finding personal meanings in stories. They need to be immersed in literature, surrounded by books, art, and writing materials of all kinds for extending and interpreting books, and given time to listen to and read stories.

Television and other media are so pervasive in our society that many children begin school never having heard a story or having seen a significant adult in their lives reading a book. In order to counteract this neglect, schools need to become centers of rich literacy experiences (Huck, 1987).

In his longitudinal study of the literacy achievement of children, Wells (1986) places much emphasis on the value of reading aloud. He talks about Jonathon, who ranked highest of all the children studied at seven and at the ending of his schooling, and Rosie, who was at the bottom and never changed rank. Wells estimated that Jonathon had heard approximately 6,000 stories before entering school,

while Rosie had not heard one. Wells attributes much significance to the power of children hearing stories read aloud.

A literature based reading program is rooted in the whole language approach, which has children learning from whole language units, such as songs, poems, and simple stories. Reading is done in context, as opposed to a basic skills approach in which children learn isolated skills. The methods of instruction aim at helping all children adopt the reading behaviors of good readers, recognizing that there are some important distinctions between good and poor readers:

1. Good readers use many different word analysis strategies, while poor readers "sound it out." If sounding out fails, poor readers have no alternatives.
2. Good readers self-correct if they make a mistake that does not make sense; poor readers ignore their reading errors.
3. Good readers read for meaning; poor readers read to pronounce words correctly.
4. Good readers reread favorite books and become fluent readers; poor readers seldom reread and thus rarely experience fluency.

5. Good readers seek out books by favorite authors; poor readers don't notice who wrote the books they read.
6. Good readers read for their own pleasure; poor readers read because it is a school assignment.
7. Good readers discuss books with their friends, and exchange opinions on good books to read; poor readers do not discuss reading (Lamme, 1985).

Literature has proved to be an excellent vehicle for developing, enhancing, and enriching lifelong, active literacy. Compared to the basal text, it words better. The use of literature for teaching literacy is tried and tested, grounded in research, and based on natural learning theory. New Zealand, the country with the highest literacy rate in the world, has been teaching with literature for over twenty years. Australia has followed suit, refining its methodology for the last fifteen years and continually improving its literacy levels at the same time. Canada and England, in the last ten years or more, have been working towards active literacy using children's literature as a base. Several states in our country are beginning to respect and utilize these powerful models by

pushing real books and making changes at the state level. In Vermont, a state that is known to be "wired" for whole language, a whole language background is a requirement for employment of new teachers. With the implementation of the California Reading Initiative, the state of California foresees no basals being used in classrooms within the next seven to eight years; funds have been allocated and utilized for purchase of selected, notable titles in multiple paperback copies as an alternative to the basal text. As of 1988, The Language Arts Syllabus reflects a whole language philosophy in its wording; and many in-service opportunities are available for teachers (Routman, 1988).

Becoming a Nation of Readers (Anderson, et al. 1985) decries our overreliance on workbooks and worksheets, maintaining that seventy percent of children's entire reading instruction is devoted to this kind of activity that is totally unrelated to year-by-year gains in reading proficience.

Judith Newman (1985) relates ways of creating a learning context in which reading and writing became tools for finding out about the world. This list includes:

a) Language and language learning are social activities; they occur best in a situation which encourages

discussion and a sharing of knowledge and ideas.

b) Language learning necessarily involves the risk of trying new strategies; error is inherent in the process.

c) Reading and writing are context-specific; what is learned about reading and writing is a reflection of the particular situation in which the learning is occurring.

d) Choice is an essential element for learning; there must be opportunities for students to choose what to read and what to write about.

e) "Whole language" activities are those which support students in their use of all aspects of language; students learn about reading and writing while listening; they learn about writing from reading and gain insights about reading from writing.

f) Our role as teachers is best seen as "leading from behind" by supporting the language learning capabilities of students indirectly through the activities we offer them (pp. 5,6).

Moss (1984) shares "focus units" as expansive literary experiences created around themes and objectives. Sample questions are used to guide comprehension, comparative study and analysis of stories and literary

forms and activities that include the creative arts. Focus units for fourth grade level include "Folktale Patterns" and "Dragons." Questioning, as a strategy for teaching thinking, is rightfully given high priority along with comparing and contrasting authors and themes. These activities are helpful in strengthening creative thinking skills.

This writer has experienced, after teaching eighteen years, that many basic programs were not meeting the children's needs, especially those below grade level. The most commonly used program this writer has experienced has been the basal reader program. Another program used was the individualized program, with an immense amount of individualized resources available. Also used was an open concept where no walls existed. Each of these programs had various advantages but they lacked the excitement that a literature based program offers. The writer was first exposed to the Atwell Reading Approach (Atwell, 1987) at a workshop. The key to my immediate interest was the attitude of the children. After witnessing enthusiasm and a maturity not usually seen in fourth graders, the writer was immediately "sold."

The next step was to buy the book In the Middle (Atwell, 1987) which gives step-by-step guidance to conducting the reading and writing workshops.

The reading workshop begins with a mini-lesson. Five to ten minutes daily is spent talking about an author, or specific skill needed to improve the reading process. Focus is on the writing and reading processes, how we read and reread a text and how authors might have come to write as they did. The rest of the period is devoted to the independent reading of books the student has chosen.

The writing workshop is also preceeded by a mini-lesson. These lessons range from topic searches, writing and editing techniques to individual lessons in grammar and punctuation. The rest of the period is devoted to actual writing on student-chosen topics.

Donald Graves, Donald Murray, Lucy Caulkins, and others have developed the process writing approach. Young writers are allowed time for pre-writing, for thinking about and planning what they will say. Then there is time for the writing. Finally, there is time to share with classmates what was written. Getting responses from a real peer audience is helpful in revision (Graves, 1983).

Instead of tight teacher-control of the what, when and how of writing, the child is given control of the

writing. This is a significant shift of focus, from teaching to learning, and it changes the writing program. The program is completely individualized and the child makes responsible decisions about what to write. There is daily time to learn to write by writing, where the child can discover his or her unique way or "process" of writing. There is time to talk individually with the teacher "in conference" where the quality of writing can be improved (Turbill, 1985).

It is significant to realize the most creative environments in our society are not the ever-changing ones. The artist's studio, the researcher's laboratory, and the scholar's library are each deliberately kept simple so as to support the complexities of the work-in-progress. They are deliberately kept predictable, so the unpredictable can happen. The juxtaposition of a complex, changing craft such as writing and a simple consistent environment frees the children to make choices as they write (Caulkins, 1983).

In summary, it takes a good story to teach reading comprehension and to hold a reader's interest. Students learn the language of literature by reading and hearing literature read aloud. Students draw upon what they read as a source of knowledge when they write. Teachers can

demonstrate enthusiasm for reading through shared reading, reading aloud, and reading in groups. Students who read a lot become fluent readers. Enthusiasm for reading is contagious.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Pre-planning

Pre-planning activities consisted of gathering a large source of books to supplement the classroom library. A reading folder was prepared for each student to record the books read, author and date completed. The writing folder contained several record-keeping sheets such as: topic idea sheet, skills learned sheet, list of completed pieces, and examples of types of writings. Their folders were used daily to record all reading and writing activities.

In reading workshops, mini-lessons were taught daily consisting of these components: hearing gocd literature, reading predictable books, developing reading strategies, sharing literature projects, skills development, and independent reading of self-selected books and journal writing. Each class period concluded with thirty minutes of silent reading.

The writing workshop was introduced as the integral part of the language arts program. The students experienced the writing program by writing daily. Besides writing on self-selected topics, such as journal writing, stories and messages to each other, focused writing

includes letters, invitations, summaries of experiments and reactions to books, films and other classroom activities. The culmination will be a published piece in a book form.

Time was also set aside weekly for a joint reading and writing effort with a first grade class. These weekly sessions were devoted to sharing literature, reading aloud to each other and writing short pieces together.

Week One

The students were given the Stanford Reading Test to test vocabulary and comprehension skills. The Elementary Reading Test was given to score the student's attitudes in reading and a literary test was given to evaluate student's knowledge of literature. The students were then introduced to the literature based reading and writing program. They were instructed in the daily procedures of recording and keeping track of their reading and writings.

Week Two

The first author-illustrator introduced was Steven Kellogg. His writing career was discussed and an

assortment of his books was read and enjoyed. This same lesson was also shared with the first grade class.

The poetry reading for the week was "The Loser" by Shel Silverstein. This poem was read daily and then recited from memory by Friday. Two take-offs from this poem were performed by four students. One group changed the words to the idea of losing her hair instead of her head. The students then read silently for thirty minutes daily at this time.

The first writing workshop began with a formal introduction to the writing process. Folders were passed out and details explained. The first writing assignment was a paragraph written about themselves. They were to state their name and important details about their lives.

Week Three

Reading aloud each day continues to be important. The book, The Lion's Paw by Robb White was read aloud daily to integrate oral reading with our Florida History Unit. The students then wrote a diary listing the daily activities and thoughts of one of the characters.

Poetry was read and reread daily. The class learned the poem "It's Dark in Here" by Shel Silverstein. This second poem used by Shel Silverstein was an enjoyable beginning to an appreciation for poetry.

The book If You Give A Mouse A Cookie was read to the class as a model for the next writing. A class book was then written, with the title becoming "If you Give a Hamster An Eraser." The book was printed in big book format and a volunteer illustrated the book. Each student then preceeded to write their own book. These were edited and bound in a big book format. This activity was first shared with the first grade class and then they began to write their own mouse stories with the help of the fourth graders. A third grade class asked to borrow our finished books and they completed the same assignment with their teacher. As a big thank you, their class wrote a book titled, "If You Loan A Class A Book." This writing assignment spiraled into a very creative and special project.

Reading skills taught this week were vocabulary exercises with synonyms and antonyms, reading using context clues, and decoding words with the suffix -ist.

Week Four

Dr. Seuss was the accented author of the week. His life and style of writing were analyzed. Many of the author's books were checked out from the library and the next thirty minutes was spent reading his books with

reading buddies. This same lesson was also shared with the first grade class. Finally, a Dr. Seuss video was watched and the class reviewed the movie, analyzing the characters, theme and plot.

The read aloud book for the week was The Indian in the Cupboard by Lynn Banks. This was a favorite book, with the concept of sequels being introduced. The students then wrote a short story telling what they would do if they could spend a day with a character from the cupboard.

Reading skills taught this week were vocabulary, fact and opinion, and glossary strategies.

Week Five

Jack Prelutsky was the featured poet of the week. His poems were read daily and the class completed a book collage with his poem, "I Met A Dragon Face to Face" in the middle. Cut-up pictures from old Troll and Scholastic book order forms were placed around the poem.

The read-aloud book of the week was Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing by Judy Blume. This was a truly enjoyable and entertaining book. The students then created a picture book illustrating the characters and their favorite scenes.

The students were then assigned to read another book by Judy Blume and compare the writer's style and characters.

Reading skills practiced this week were figurative language, predictions, and decoding words with the prefixes re- and im-.

Week Six

Peggy Parrish was the featured author this week. We discovered she wrote many other fictional books besides her famous "Amelia Bedelia" books. We analyzed her writing style and her exaggerated use of the language. The class then proceeded to model their own books after her example.

Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" was shared with the students through reading short sections of his work. The students were then asked to write three statements about themselves. These three statements were then broadened to form a poem entitled "Song of Myself." These were then typed and placed on a silhouette of a body and displayed.

The read-aloud book this week was Cry Wolf. This was a very entertaining book about a boy constantly talking his father into telling him stories. The students were asked to predict at various times during the story what would happen next.

Reading skills worked on this week were vocabulary, context clues, and sequencing skills.

Week Seven

Roald Dahl was chosen as the special author of the week. The book Matilda was chosen as the read-aloud book. This book became one of the class favorites. The students were constantly surprised and amazed at Matilda's cleverness. The study of Dahl continued with reading about his life and learning his reasons for writing and where the ideas came from. The week was completed with the watching of the video, "The BFG."

Angie Giovanni was our special poet this week. The class focused on the poem, "The Drum" and then created their own poem using an instrument to express their feelings. The students then tried to put their words to music.

This week focused on creating a "How-To Booklet." The students wrote their suggestions for becoming a perfect teacher, for becoming an A student, and giving advice to beginning writers. This activity turned into a cleverly written book which was printed on the computer on a special publishing format, The Children's Writing and Publishing Center (The Learning Company, 1989). The laminated pages and illustrated cover have become a unique keepsake.

Week Eight

The read-aloud book this week was Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Peterson. The class studied the author and discovered she had written many successful books. Several students have now checked out her books.

This Newbery Award winning book shared the feelings of a boy and a girl who became best friends. The book addressed feelings of fear, apprehension, and death. Near the end of the book, the class begged the writer to continue, even accepting homework because class assignment time would be used up, just to hear the ending. This was a unique experience for this writer.

Another special writing assignment was introduced. A nonfiction book was read about the three whales caught in the ice. The students then scanned the newspaper looking for an article of interest. A news story on a young boy saving a girl's life by using the Heimlich maneuver was selected. The class was divided into researchers and writers, illustrators and editors. These groups worked on their areas of interest and a final book form was completed. These groups researched choking and the Heimlich maneuver and searched for appropriate illustrations. This activity was finalized into three identical class books.

Reading skills addressed this week were vocabulary activities, understanding words in context, and predicting outcomes.

Week Nine

Week nine began an emphasis on the creative arts. The "true story" of Cinderella and the Three Little Pigs was read with the point of view coming from the sisters and the wolf. The students then voted to choose "Little Red Riding Hood" as a story to rewrite. The class was divided into four groups and each was to create a new version. One group created a rap, which was extremely popular. The entire class insisted on learning and joining in on the rap.

Picture books were evaluated this week. The students loved the clever illustrations, beautiful use of language and appealing stories. We read and discussed many Caldecott award winning books. These books are excellent for prediction, inferential questioning, comprehension and art appreciation. One of the favorites was Carl's Christmas by Alexandra Day. The only words come at the beginning where the family leaves and tells Carl, the dog, to take care of the baby. The book then tells a beautiful

story using only pictures. These outstanding literary books also serve as wonderful models for short, specific writings.

Week Ten

This week a whole class reading was used with each student having their own personal copy of the book Sounder. Reading a book together as a whole class, orally and silently, was a pleasurable, nonthreatening experience for the students. This book gave us opportunities for prediction and inferential reasoning, as well as building confidence and group spirit.

Another read-aloud story was Romeo and Juliet. This familiar story was read from a book written in story form. By introducing Shakespeare, the students were exposed to another facet of literature, usually avoided until higher grades. The real play was also found and the students enjoyed studying the comparisons.

The Romeo and Juliet story was also a springboard to another writing assignment. The students were to retell the story in their own words. This produced amazing results. The students wrote varied versions of the story, some remembered different parts and one student changed the ending to a happy one.

A comparison of themes in books was analyzed this week. The class charted the types of books read and grouped them into similar themes.

Week Eleven

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen was the read-aloud book for this week. This book is about a boy named Brian traveling in a plane to visit his divorced father. He is very angry about the situation. While flying, the pilot dies and Brian is left to land the plane and then forced to try to survive. This experience allowed Brian to grow and mature, and he tells us he feels he is a different person now than he was at the beginning of the story. This story was another favorite of the class.

This story prompted many feelings from the students. Over half the class comes from divorced family situations and they were compassionate toward the character. They were also thrilled with his creativity in handling situations in the woods. They also marveled at the fact that Brian no longer felt he should tell his father "the secret." The students were then asked to consider one way they would have handled the situation in the woods differently than Brian did.

The writing activity this week was a contest for Armed Forces Day. The students were reading and studying George Washington, taking notes and planning to write a paper. The notes were organized and outlined and then the students wrote a two-to-three page paper. This proved especially effective, as the class realized a need for clear note taking and careful listening.

Week Twelve

Posttests completed this week were the same as the pretests. After the posttests were completed, gains and analysis of the test results were completed.

Chapter IV

Results

The literature based reading and writing program was evaluated by use of the Stanford Reading Test, the Reading Attitude Survey and a teacher-prepared literature competency test, as well as observational techniques used daily. The students were tested on two areas of the Stanford Reading Test: vocabulary and comprehension. The Reading Attitude Survey was given to evaluate the students' attitudes towards recreational and instructional reading. The tests were given the entire last week of the project, with the test being divided daily, so as to test the students fresh each morning.

The Stanford Reading Test was used to evaluate objectives one and two. 13 (57%) of the 23 students tested indicate scores of grade levels of 4.8 or higher in vocabulary. Comprehension scores tested higher with 18 (78%) of the 23 students tested at grade level or higher. The total class grade equivalent was 5.3 in vocabulary and 6.2 in comprehension. Objective one was met in comprehension scores and the class as a whole tested above the 4.8 grade equivalent.(Appendix A and B)

The Reading Lab students, who are referred to as below-level readers in objective two, increased 9% in vocabulary and 13% in comprehension. This increase was far short of expectations, but possibly expectations were too high for a twelve-week period. (Appendix C)

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, referred to in objective three, (Appendix D) showed a 100% increase in the number of books read and a 50% increase in the amount of students choosing to read at their leisure. The number of books read was substantiated by examining the reading folders, where all books read are listed. Teacher observation was used to note the number of students reading in their spare time.

The fourth objective evaluated by the literary competency test (Appendix E) was an assortment of questions about authors and their works. A pre-test showed most students had no favorite author and could not list any award winning book. The posttest showed vast improvement of knowledge of literary information. Information tested was matching a list of authors and their most famous works, telling how books are given the Caldecott and Newbery awards and general information about books and authors.

Objective five was easily met as fourth grade students met weekly with first graders. Activities during these

visits consisted of buddy reading and writing sessions. The advantages to the fourth graders was substantial as students looked forward to these visits and began selecting special books to read together. A kinship was developed, especially while working on written projects where leadership skills appeared. These sessions were used to develop a booklet worked on together by both groups of students.

Meeting objective six, the fourth graders completed several writing projects which were published in classroom book form. Books included a "How To Booklet", a "February Love Book", and a nonfiction story written from a newspaper article about a child choking.

Objective seven was evaluated during sustained silent reading time, where 21 (91%) of the 23 students utilized this time effectively. Two students gave the appearance of reading, but after close observation, this writer felt very little reading was actually going on. During the writing workshop time, 22 (95%) of 23 students utilized this time effectively. Twenty two students had productively written several pieces during this time frame.

Critical thinking skills, evaluated in objective eight, were involved in the students' comprehension skills and activities. They summarized stories, and understood

cause and effect when explaining how one person affects the life of another. They were sequencing and noting details as they retold the steps of Brian's time in the woods in Hatchet. They understood vocabulary in context, paraphrasing ideas and interpreting purposes by listening to read-aloud stories of a higher level. They understood interpreting figurative language as they read the group book, Sounder. They also analyzed character traits and motivation in Sounder. They were predicting outcomes when they foretold the ending to Matilda. From listening to Romeo and Juliet, they gave opinions, made judgements and drew conclusions.

Not all objectives were met as expected but the writer believes that long range implementation would increase and probably surpass the projected outcome objectives.

Chapter V

Recommendations

The writer envisions the use of a literature based reading program as having a positive effect on all students. This project was shared with the assistant principal and several other teachers, who began to implement this program after seeing and hearing about such a positive response from the students. Wide-spread interest caused a monthly gathering of interested teachers; and special invited guests were called in to speak. This writer has spoken for two groups, who have shown an interest in the progress. Plans are already being made for meetings to take place this summer, workshops are being organized, and bookmaking sessions are also being scheduled.

The basic procedures of this practicum are therefore strongly recommended for use in the reading and writing program. The writer will be available to provide in-service for teachers and parents. It is also recommended that the basic theories and strategies in the program be applied to all content-area teaching.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

Vocabulary

Appendix A

Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

Vocabulary

Student	Pre-test	Post	Difference
1.	3.9	4.9	+1.0
2.	3.5	4.0	+0.5
3.	3.8	4.9	+1.1
4.	4.9	6.2	+2.0
5.	6.0	4.2	-2.0
6.	4.7	4.7	.0
7.	5.6	6.1	+0.5
8.	3.4	3.8	+0.4
9.	3.5	6.9	+3.4
10.	3.7	6.9	+3.2
11.	3.4	4.0	+0.6
12.	2.3	3.0	+0.7
13.	3.6	3.8	+0.2
14.	6.7	8.0	+1.3
15.	5.6	8.0	+2.4
16.	4.9	6.9	+2.0
17.	4.9	6.1	+1.2
18.	6.0	6.1	+0.1
19.	4.2	4.9	+0.7
20.	3.3	4.3	+1.0
21.	3.8	5.2	+1.4
22.	3.8	4.3	+0.5
23.	4.5	4.5	.0

57% of the target group scored a grade equivalent of 4.8 or higher. The total class increase in vocabulary skills was 14%.

Appendix B

Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

Comprehension

Appendix B

Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

Comprehension

Student	Pre-test	Post	Difference
1.	7.0	5.7	-1.3
2.	7.0	7.5	+0.5
3.	4.4	7.5	+3.1
4.	7.0	7.5	+0.5
5.	2.8	4.5	+1.7
6.	4.7	9.0	+4.3
7.	7.0	7.5	+0.5
8.	3.5	3.9	+0.4
9.	3,0	5,2	+2,2
10.	4.3	6.4	+2.1
11.	4.2	3.7	-0.5
12.	2.9	3.5	+0.6
13.	4.0	4.9	+0.9
14.	8.0	6.4	-1.6
15.	5.7	9.0	+3.3
16.	3.6	7.5	+3.9
17.	7.0	5.7	-1.3
18.	7.0	7.5	+0.5
19.	3.7	7.5	+3.8
20.	3.7	7.5	+3.8
21.	6.2	9.0	+2.8
22.	1.8	3.4	+1.6
23.	3.0	5.0	+2.0

78% of the target group scored a grade equivalent of 4.8 or higher. The total class increase in comprehension skills was 20%.

Appendix C

Reading Lab Students Scores

Appendix C

Reading Lab Students Scores

Percent Increase

Student	Vocabulary	Comprehension
1.	0	-12
2.	+14	+21
3.	+ 5	+14
4.	+18	+28

The Reading Lab students increased 9% in vocabulary scores, and 13% in comprehension scores.

Appendix D

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

Appendix D

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

	Positive Responses Pretest	Post
1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?	10	13
2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?	9	14
3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?	6	16
4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?	10	19
5. How do you feel about spending free time reading?	8	12
6. How do you feel about starting a new book?	8	15
7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?	5	16
8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?	4	8
9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?	15	19
10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?	8	12
11. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?	8	17
12. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?	2	1
13. How do you feel about reading in school?	10	19

14.	How do you feel about reading from your school books?	3	5
15.	How do you feel about learning from a book?	8	12
16.	How do you feel when it's time for reading class?	10	21
17.	How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?	12	19
18.	How do you feel when you read out loud in class?	14	18
19.	How do you feel about using a dictionary?	0	3
20.	How do you feel about taking a reading test?	3	8

Percentile ranks cannot be average directly from this test. This test shows a great improvement in the attitudes of the students.

Appendix E

Literary Competency Survey

Pre- and Posttest

Appendix E

Literary Competency Survey

Pretest

Name_____

1. Name your favorite book._____
2. Name your favorite author._____
3. Tell what the Newbery Book Award is given for._____

   _____
4. Tell what the Caldecott Award is given for._____

   _____
5. How often do you read for fun?_____
6. How many books do you own?_____

Appendix E

Literacy Competency Survey

A. Place the author's letter next to the book he/she authored.

1. Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing_____	A. Chris Van Allsburg
2. The Lion's Paw_____	B. Shel Silverstein
3. The Loser_____	C. Katherine Paterson
4. Bridge to Terabithia_____	D. Gary Paulsen
5. Hatchet_____	E. Steven Kellogg
6. Matilda_____	F. Judy Blume
7. Jumanji_____	G. Roald Dahl
8. Amelia Bedelia_____	H. Robb White
9. The Mysterious Tadpole _____	I. Peggy Parish
10. New Kid on the Block_____	J. Jack Prelutsky

B. Name one Newbery and one Caldecott award-winning book.

Newbery:_____

Caldecott:_____

C. Name your favorite book._____

D. Tell in several sentences why this is your favorite.

_____

_____

_____